APRIL 2025

Rock Talk

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

The Hope Diamond Curse

The Hope Diamond curse has been a subject of fascination for decades. While diamonds are traditionally known as symbols of wealth, beauty, and love this large, unusually colored stone that is widely believed to be cursed. Many of those who have owned or simply touched this stone have met tragedy by going insane, suffering serious illnesses, committing suicide, or losing their fortunes—even being executed by guillotine.

This stone, paradoxically celebrated for its beauty yet feared for its curse, is the Hope Diamond. The size of a walnut and a deep blue gem in color, it is the world's best-known diamond. Over its 370-year-long, often murky history, it has become immersed in legend, stolen at least twice and cut four times. Its owners have included sultans, kings, bankers, jewelers, thieves, a popular stage performer, and a fabulously wealthy heiress.

Since 1958, the Hope Diamond has been a major attraction at the National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution) in Washington D.C., where it has been viewed by more than 100 million visitors and is currently valued at over $250 million.

The Hope Diamond's strange story began in 1653 when French gem merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier visited India's Golconda Sultanate. There he purchased a crudely cut, triangular, flat, blue diamond of extraordinary size—115 carats. According to legend, this diamond, now known as the "Tavernier Diamond," had been cursed since it previously had been plucked from the eye of a statue of a Hindu idol.

After returning to Europe in 1668, Tavernier sold the diamond to King Louis XIV of France, who ordered the stone recut. Tavernier wrote extensively about the gem before his death in Moscow the following year—when he was reportedly dismembered by a pack of wild dogs.

This Month's Roundup of Stories

- Hope Diamond
- Secretary's Report
- April 2025 Announcements
- Kentucky Agate
- Name That Slab
- Fancy Jasper
- Black Moonstone
- Mookite Jasper
- Bench Tips

April's Birthstone - Diamond

When the Hope Diamond was formally graded for the first time in 1988, Gemological Institute of America experts noted its exact weight as 45.52 carats and described its cut as "cushion antique brilliant," its color as "fancy, dark grayish-blue," and its symmetry as "fair to good." They also classified the Hope as a very rare type IIb (traces of boron, absence of nitrogen) diamond. And contrary to many historical assessments, the Hope is not flawless. Its clarity grade is VS1, short of the highest VS2 grade because of faint, whitish graining, minor inclusions called "feathers," and several wear marks—the latter not surprising considering the stone's often turbulent history.

Read the entire article at *RockNGem.com*

Secretary's Report

Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson

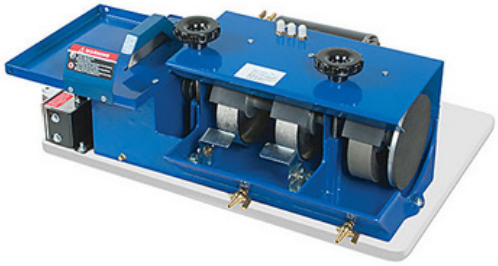
Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting - Minutes
Date 3-12-2025

The meeting was called to order by President Anthony Maffatone at 7:10pm.
We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.
There were no new members to recognize.
There were 4 guests in attendance: Joey&Leah with son Isaiah, and Randy.
Leslie Newberry made a motion to accept the minutes of our February meeting as printed in the newsletter, Michael Steverson seconded. Passed by all members.
Treasurer Janet Wheeler was not present so there was no Treasurer's report.
President Maffatone began with announcements;
Tonight's program will be "Cabalot" where members get to try working on the grinding/polishing machines. Professional Cabber Janice Wojcik will give us the rules for using the machines and instructions for cutting a cabochon.
This will begin after the meeting.
Marty will be offering sluicing again at his property at 15432 Dennis Drive in Hudson on Sunday the 16th from Noon to 5pm.
President Maffatone asked how many members would be interested in coming early to the monthly meetings to be able to use the grinding/polishing machines. 10 people raised their hands. Hunter Mellring volunteered to come early and set up the machines.
President Maffatone reminded everyone if they use the machines they need to help clean them up at the end of the night.
Janice Wojcik announced the program for April will be the 2nd Annual "Name that Slab!" She will show 40 pictures of various rock slabs on the TV and members will write the names of the stones on a sheet provided by the game host.
Prizes will be given to the winners!
The Wire Wrapping classes are in the works and will be happening very soon.
Michael Steverson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, James Roush seconded, passed by all.
Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.

April 2025 Announcements

Any members looking for a Lapidary machine that does it all?
Here is an opportunity to get a Barranca Diamond Cab Combo machine at a great price. This machine has never been removed from the box it was shipped in. It belonged to an avid rockhound who bought it and never got to use it because he became ill and passed away. His Widow wants it to go to someone who will use and enjoy it.
The going price for this now is $1400.00, plus freight.
Asking price is $1200.00 or best reasonable offer.
Serious inquires only.
Marieanne Schultz mswalkswithhorses@gmail.com
813-777-8987



MKDiamond.com

Jean Casanova has friend whose mother passed away, and is looking to sell the collection of rocks, crystals and more that her mother acquired over the years. Please call Jean to schedule a time to visit her and look through the collection. 352.442.2667
Below are some images of some of the items she has.

Michele Evans has some additional items she is looking to sell.
Below are some of her items. Michele says prices are between $5 to $25.
The amber from Poland will be slightly higher.
See Michele at our next meeting.

Kentucky Agate

Kentucky Agate is a unique variety of agate primarily found in the state of Kentucky, United States. It is known for its strikingly beautiful patterns, vibrant colors, and translucent qualities, making it a highly sought-after material for jewelry and lapidary work.

The formation of Kentucky Agate is tied to the geological history of the region. Agates, including Kentucky Agate, are a type of chalcedony, which is a form of microcrystalline quartz. They are typically formed within cavities or vesicles in volcanic rocks, such as basalt, and are the result of deposition from silica-rich fluids over long periods of time.

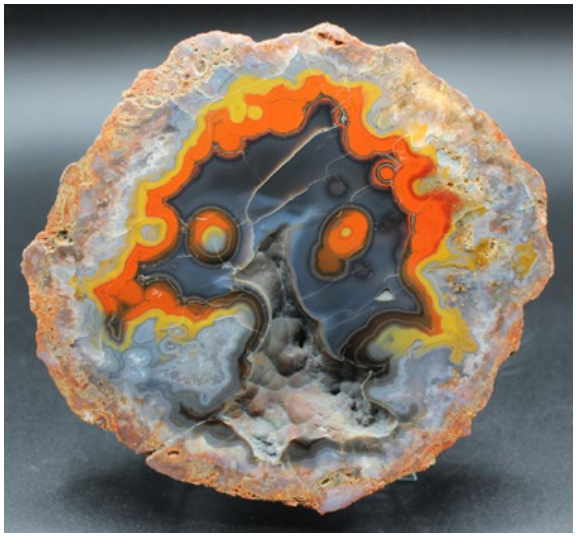
Kentucky Agate is primarily found in certain regions of Kentucky, United States. While it is not as abundant as agate deposits in some other states, such as Oregon or Montana, Kentucky Agate is still actively mined by enthusiasts and small-scale operations.

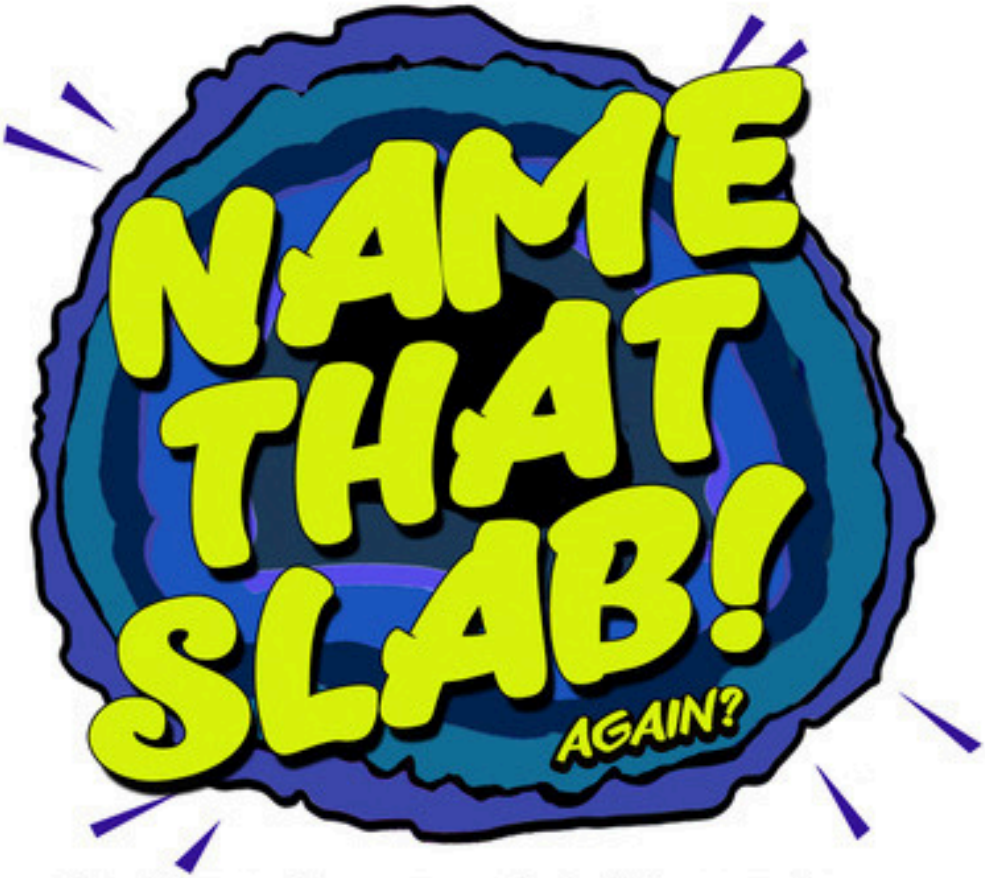
The specific locations where Kentucky Agate can be found include:

1. Western Kentucky: One of the main regions where Kentucky Agate is found is in western Kentucky, particularly in areas near the Ohio River. Counties such as Caldwell, Crittenden, and Livingston are known for their agate deposits.
2. Central Kentucky: Some pockets of Kentucky Agate can also be found in central Kentucky, although they are less common compared to western Kentucky. Counties such as Hart and Edmonson have been known to yield Kentucky Agate specimens.
3. Stream Beds and Gravel Deposits: Kentucky Agate is often discovered in stream beds, gravel bars, and other sedimentary deposits. Agate hunters and rockhounds frequently search these areas for loose agate nodules that have been weathered out of their original matrix.
4. Roadcuts and Construction Sites: Occasionally, Kentucky Agate may be uncovered during road construction or excavation activities. These incidental discoveries can lead to the identification of new agate deposits in previously unexplored areas.

It's important to note that mining activities for Kentucky Agate are often carried out by hobbyists, rockhounds, and small-scale operators rather than large commercial enterprises. Additionally, as with any type of mining or collecting activity, it's essential to obtain permission from landowners and follow local regulations and guidelines to ensure responsible and sustainable practices.

Read the article at
GeologyScience.com





Don't know the names of all of those rocks
and slabs that you buy at Gem & Mineral Shows?
Tired of asking "What kind of stone is that?"
Then you'll love **NAME THAT SLAB!**
It's the Withlacoochee Rockhounds game show that
will help you identify common as well
as not-so-common rock slabs.
It's a slide show quiz of 40 slabs to identify,
with fabulous prizes for the top three winners.
A fun way to learn more about rock identification and
show fellow club members how much you know (or don't know!).
Come on Down!
and **NAME THAT SLAB!** at our April 9th, 2025 meeting.

Clubhouse Address:
3357 Susan Dr
Spring Hill, FL 34606

Fancy Jasper

Fancy Jasper forms through the geological process of mineralization, where various mineral components, including iron, manganese, and silica, come together under specific conditions. This process usually occurs within sedimentary rocks or volcanic rocks, where these minerals precipitate and crystallize over time. The result is a gemstone with intricate patterns and a range of colors, often due to the varying concentrations of the minerals involved and the environmental conditions during its formation.

Typically, Fancy Jasper is found in several locations around the world. Notable sources include regions in the United States, such as Oregon and California, as well as parts of India, Madagascar, and Brazil. These areas provide the necessary geological conditions for Fancy Jasper's formation, contributing to its availability and the variety of patterns and colors observed in the gemstone.

Fancy Jasper is renowned for its vibrant and diverse color range, which typically includes various shades of greens, reds, browns, and yellows. These colors result from the different mineral impurities and elements present during its formation. The interplay of these hues creates a visually captivating stone with a natural, mosaic-like quality.

Common patterns in Fancy Jasper include swirls, mottling, and speckling. Swirling patterns can create a dynamic, fluid appearance that mimics the movement of water or clouds. Mottled patterns, where colors blend in irregular patches, give the stone a more organic, earthy look. Speckled or dotted patterns are also prevalent, providing a textured appearance with small, contrasting color spots.

The meanings attributed to these patterns often revolve around their symbolic representation of balance and harmony. The varied colors and patterns are thought to embody the blending of different energies and aspects of life, promoting a sense of unity and wholeness. This symbolism enhances the gemstone's appeal in both decorative and metaphysical contexts.

Read the entire article at *GeologyScience.com*

Black Moonstone

Black Moonstone is a type of feldspar mineral that belongs to the same group of minerals as the traditional Moonstone, which is often characterized by its bluish or white adularescence, a phenomenon where the gemstone displays a glowing, almost moon-like sheen when it catches the light. However, Black Moonstone distinguishes itself with its deep, dark coloration. It typically appears in shades of black, gray, charcoal, or dark brown, sometimes featuring subtle flashes of blue, silver, or other colors when light hits its surface. This captivating play of colors within the dark base makes Black Moonstone a highly sought-after gemstone for jewelry and metaphysical purposes.

Black Moonstone is found in various locations around the world, with some regions being particularly well-known for producing high-quality specimens.

Here are some of the notable locations where Black Moonstone can be found:

- India: India is one of the most famous sources of Black Moonstone.
- Madagascar: Madagascar is another significant source of Black Moonstone.
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, is known for its gemstone mining, and it also produces Black Moonstone.
- Ukraine: Ukraine is a European source of Black Moonstone, particularly from the Zhitomir region.
- United States: In the United States, Black Moonstone has been found in a few locations, including New Mexico and Nevada. While not as widely known as some international sources, these American deposits can yield interesting specimens.
- Other Locations: Black Moonstone can also be found in smaller quantities in various other countries, including Canada, Australia, and parts of Africa.

It's important to note that the quality and characteristics of Black Moonstone can vary depending on its source. Some locations may produce stones with more intense labradorescence or specific color variations. Additionally, the availability of Black Moonstone from these sources may change over time due to mining activities and geological factors. As with any gemstone, the market for Black Moonstone values specimens with exceptional play of colors and overall quality.

Read the article at *GeologyScience.com*

Mookaite Jasper

Mookaite Jasper, often simply referred to as Mookaite, is a type of jasper, a variety of chalcedony, known for its striking colors and distinctive patterns. This unique gemstone is highly regarded in the world of semi-precious stones and is valued for its aesthetic appeal as well as its perceived metaphysical properties.

Mookaite Jasper is a cryptocrystalline variety of quartz, which means that it consists of microscopic crystals. It is typically composed of silicon dioxide, like many other varieties of jasper. What sets Mookaite apart is its remarkable range of colors, which can include shades of red, yellow, brown, white, and even purple. These colors often occur in swirling or banded patterns, giving each piece of Mookaite its unique character.

Mookaite is known for its vibrant and earthy appearance, making it a popular choice for jewelry, cabochons, and decorative items. It is often cut into beads for bracelets, necklaces, and earrings, allowing its natural beauty to be showcased in various forms of wearable art.

Mookaite's distinct appearance is believed to be the result of the sedimentation and mineralization of ancient marine fossils and microorganisms over millions of years. The unique geological processes in this region have contributed to the vibrant colors and intricate patterns found in Mookaite.

Many people believe that Mookaite possesses various healing and spiritual qualities. It is often associated with feelings of vitality, balance, and inner harmony. This gemstone is thought to promote self-confidence, courage, and a connection to the natural world.

Read the entire article at ***GeologyScience.com***

Field Trips

"Note: The Withlacoochee Rockhounds Club does not sponsor field trips other than trips that are sanctioned by the SFMS (The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies).

Our club insurance is through SFMS and does not cover excursions not listed on their website as safe."

The SFMS insurance covers the property owner where members might go, but not the club members.

Monthly Meeting Courtesy

Our monthly meetings are a time for members to get together to share their love of rocks, minerals and fossils. It is a chance to learn from each other, teach each other and bond with people that have common interests. It's also a time for the club to conduct a business meeting, during which club Officers and Directors inform club members of changes that have happened or are proposed to happen in the future to club procedure or rules.
It is a time for announcements of coming classes, programs, scholarships, and special events.
It may be a time for discussion on a topic if it is of concern to a majority of members present.
Members may also share experiences and news of interest to other members.
Our monthly meetings should always be a time of sharing, education and entertainment.

We should all show respect and consideration for each other at our meetings, especially for the Facilitator of the meeting, whether it be our President or one of our other Officers. This respect has been lacking in our meetings for several months now. A few attendees have been speaking out without being recognized, shouting, and making inappropriate comments. This not only disrupts our meetings but makes members, new and old, feel uneasy and uncomfortable. It makes our club seem very unprofessional and is disrespectful to the Officers, Directors, and your fellow members.

Going forward, our Board has decided to strive for a more business-like atmosphere while our business meetings are in order. If you are an attending member and have a question or comment, please raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Facilitator of the meeting. After you are acknowledged and speak, if you later have something else to add, please raise your hand and again be recognized to speak. Please be respectful and polite when you are addressing the Officers and Directors, who volunteer their time, work tirelessly, and make every effort to keep this club alive and prosperous.

We feel this will make for a smoother meeting with all members being heard. No members will be shouted over and no members will feel over run with chaotic outbursts. We will all feel a part of the meeting and will learn more about what our club is doing for and with us.

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Our monthly club meeting is held at the Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club, 3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com

Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month. Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

Advertisers Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the *Rock Talk* and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the *Rock Talk* and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club treasure Janet Wheeler: ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earrth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, and workshops. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.

Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues

Dues are $35.00 annually for adults, and $5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

Club Meeting Location and Time

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3375 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

2025 Club Officers and Appointees

President	Anthony Maffatone	352.397.7694	anthonymaffatone@gmail.com
Vice President	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com

Anthony Maffatone (President) Michael Steverson (Vice President) Melodye Steverson (Secretary) Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Hunter Mellring Leslie Newberry Roger Wheeler James Roush Ralph Barber (Past President)

Bench Tips from Brad Smith

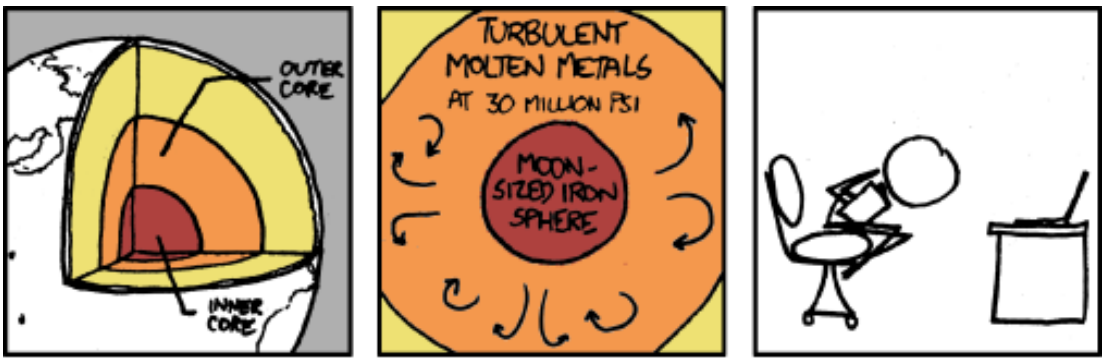
Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

MIXING EPOXY

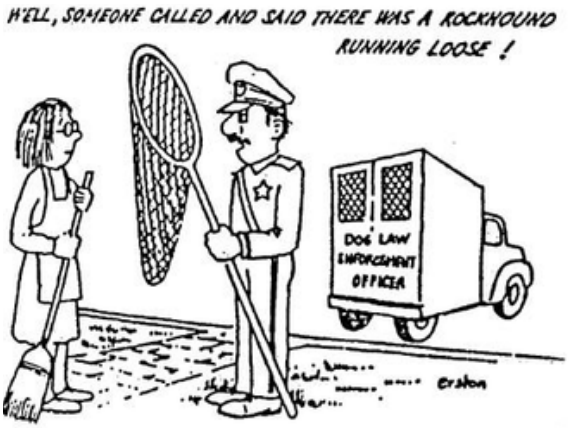
When mixing epoxy, it's very important to have the same amount of each component. If the ratio is not 50:50, the mixture will not develop the best strength or may not harden at all.
If the amounts are small, I can generally eye-ball the two components correctly. But I have trouble getting the proper mixture for larger quantities. The easiest way I've found is to use a gram scale.
> Put a bottle lid or piece of scrap paper on the scale.
> Zero out the scale.
> Squeeze out the epoxy Part A.
> Note the gram weight.
> Zero out the scale again.
> Squeeze out the same amount of Part B.
> Mix thoroughly for use.
It's a trick I had to use when mixing resins for mold making where the ratio is usually 1 to 10

Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books
Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith

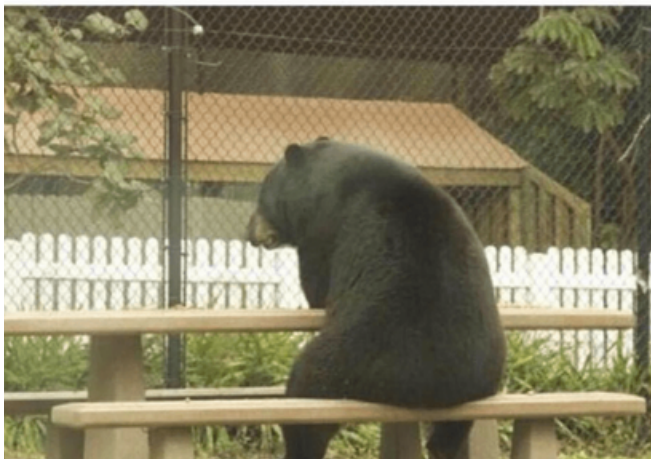
Rock Talk Funny Papers

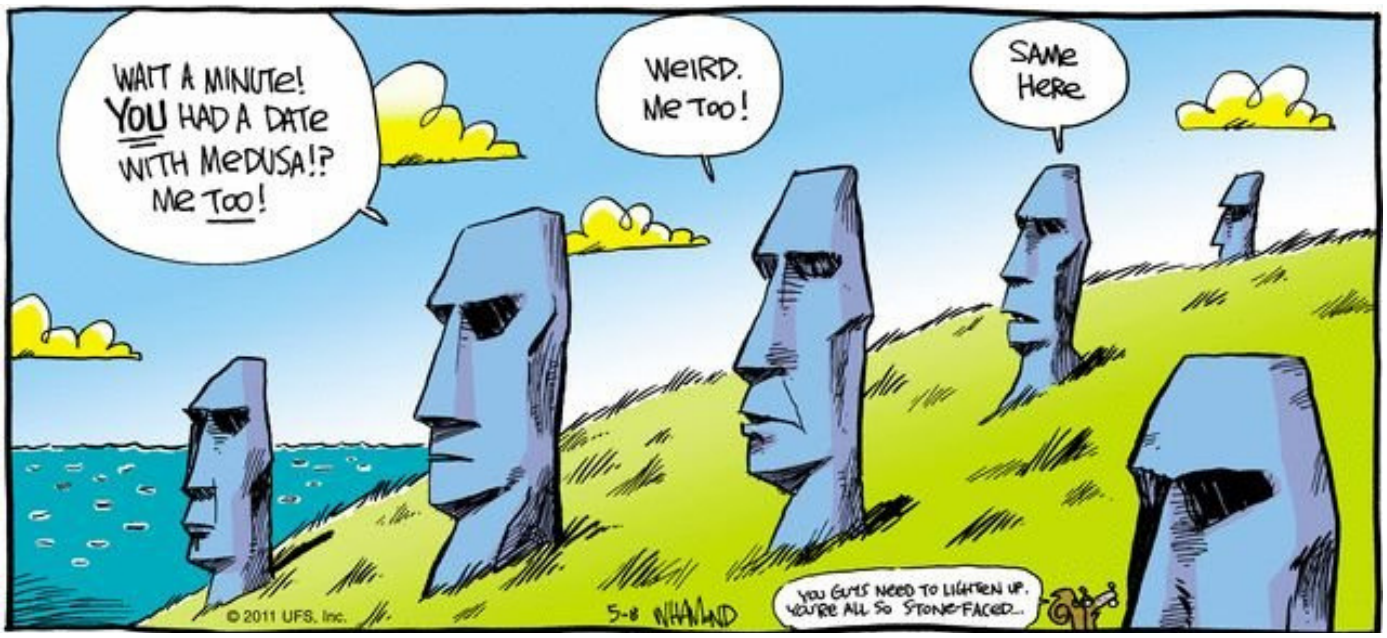


I FREAK OUT ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES INTO READING ANYTHING ABOUT THE EARTH'S CORE WHEN I SUDDENLY REALIZE IT'S *RIGHT UNDER ME.*



When you're at the family cookout and no one wants to talk about your rock collection.




WAIT A MINUTE! YOU HAD A DATE WITH MEDUSA!? ME TOO!
WEIRD. ME TOO!
SAME HERE
YOU GUYS NEED TO LIGHTEN UP. YOU'RE ALL SO STONE-FACED...
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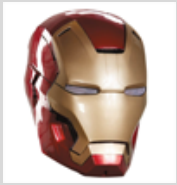
5-8 NHAVLAND



From The Editor

Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

Our March meeting marked the return of a club favorite -- CABELOT!
Club members designed a cabochon using templates, had them roughly shaped on a trim saw, and then had them cabbed by experienced club members on our Pixie cabbing machines. Everyone had a great time!
Our April meeting will be the return our famous (infamous?) version of a television game show - Name That Slab!
Janice Wojcik will be your game emcee. Prizes will be involved...so be sure to be there!

Also, remember that we are now into the new year, and membership dues are due. You can pay at the monthly meeting or, let me know and I can send a payment link to you. If your dues are not paid you will no longer officially be a paid member. Please be sure to pay!

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address, and that you are indeed subscribed.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

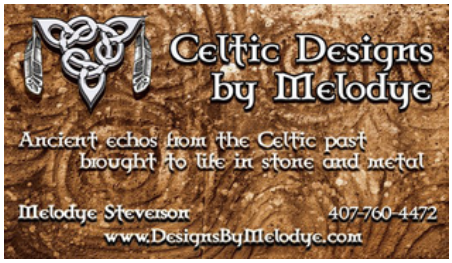
Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.
These are SCAMS.
Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monitary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.

Rockhounds Advertisers



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8255 COMMERCIAL WAY
WEEKI WACHEE, FL 34613
352-423-1311
CRYSTALS, JEWELRY, INCENSE, SAGE, TAROT, TAPESTRIES,
FOSSILS, METEORITES, RAW STONES, & SO MUCH MORE
NOT YOUR AVERAGE ROCK SHOP
Show Your Rockhounds Club Membership Card for a Discount

Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month.
Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

Advertisers Are Needed
Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.
The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.
Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.
Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Membership Form - 2025

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
Hernando County FL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name _____

Partner's Full Name
* If both applying for membership _____

Child's Full Name
* If under 18, and applying with parent _____

Street Address _____

City _____

State / ZIP _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Annual Membership Dues:

*Choose your type of membership

- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea

☐ Returning Member?

☐ New Member?

If you are applying, for example, as husband, wife and child (under 18), then fill in full name, partner's name and child's name above. Then, choose two individual memberships to the left, along with an under 18 membership.

Give this completed form, along with your check (made payable to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds") or credit card for dues to Club Secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or, you may mail the form to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634